

MANOR VALE, KIRKBYMOORSIDE

Management Plan Objectives & Programme 2024

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Manor Vale Woodland Management Objectives & Programme

MANOR VALE, KIRKBYMOORSIDE Objectives & Programme

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Manor Vale Woodland, Kirkbymoorside

Part 1: Objectives

1.1 Management objectives

Objectives of management are:

- To manage Manor Vale Wood for the enjoyment of the local community and as a wildlife habitat.
- To encourage community involvement in the management of the site and to promote public interest in the history, heritage and wildlife of Manor Vale, including educational use.
- To maintain the natural character of Manor Vale Wood.
- To maintain and promote biodiversity.
- To conserve scarce or threatened species inhabiting the site.

1.2 Constraints on management

The principal factors constraining management of the site include:

- (a) Availability of manpower, funding and resources.

Support from Ryedale District Council was made available through the design and funding of display boards, employment of the British Trust for Conservation Volunteers to undertake footpath and woodland management work and ongoing liaison with the Management Committee. As a site of district nature conservation importance, organisational support and modest funds may be available from the County Council for management projects but these are constrained by annual budgets and staff time. A small annual budget is allocated by Kirkbymoorside Town Council, the amount varying from year to year.

Due to these constraints, funding for more ambitious projects would need to be sought from other sources, e.g. landfill tax funds.

- (b) Legal liabilities e.g. those arising from the Occupiers' Liability Act regarding public safety, or those arising from wildlife protection legislation.

The main obligation regarding public safety is to deal with dangerous trees adjoining the road and footpaths. The Management Committee has an agreement with Ravenswick Estate to deal with potential hazardous timber and to remove fallen trees causing obstruction.

'Steep drop' signs had been installed to warn of hazardous old quarry cuttings on Low Knoll (Compartment 3).

None of the plants or animals recorded to date from Manor Vale receive special protection under the Wildlife & Countryside Act (1981), although it is likely that some trees contain bat roosts. If this is found to be the case, Schedule 5 of the act applies and advice must be sought from English Nature before undertaking any work on such trees. In addition, most breeding birds receive general protection under the Act, which requires that reasonable measures be taken to avoid destruction of their nests, eggs or young. For this reason, and as a matter of good practice, any felling or clearance of trees and shrubs should take place outside the period March to July.

- (c) Protection of the archaeological interest of the remains of Neville Castle within the site.

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Works which may affect the Scheduled Monument and its setting require consent from the Secretary of State via advice from the County archaeologist (North Yorkshire Council) and/or the local English Heritage Inspector of Ancient Monuments.

- (d) The location of easements for utilities such as electricity, water and telephones (see Map 3).

The location of these supplies – and the possible need for repair and maintenance works – should be considered where appropriate. In practice, few foreseeable problems should arise.

It should be noted that lopping of trees along the route of the overhead electricity supply will be required from time to time (this work is usually undertaken by the supply company). This would mainly affect area C, an open glade with a few young trees, and is unlikely to have any detrimental impact.

- (e) The need to maintain road access for the golf club.

The golf club has responsibility for maintenance of the road and the immediate verge. The Management Committee is responsible for prompt removal of fallen timber which might obstruct the road, and for hazardous trees adjoining the road.

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Part 2: Management programme

This section summarises the work undertaken to date since the acquisition of the site in 1993 and outlines the management necessary to meet the objectives set out in the preceding section.

2.1 Recent management

In 1993, work began to thin encroaching hawthorn, fencing was completed and boundary markers installed, and steps were constructed on a steep section of footpath. Paths were opened up to improve access.

In 1994, a new gate was fitted at the Castlegate entrance to the site and the road verges mown several times.

In 1995, further thinning of the scrub on Low Knoll was undertaken and 'No Tipping' and 'Steep Drop' signs erected by one of the old quarries. Ivy growth on the castle wall was controlled by spraying and cutting the main stems.

In 1996, thinning work continued and a notice board was erected in February. Two seats, made from timber from a fallen oak tree, were installed and the path at the Castlegate entrance stoned.

In 1997, further thinning was carried out and repairs to the steps were undertaken. Small scale thinning has continued in 1998-99 with scrub cut back from the margins on the limestone grassland area. Gaps in the boundary hedge along the eastern edge of Manor Vale have been planted up and a new gate installed at the Castlegate entrance.

Much of the thinning and footpath work has been undertaken by the British Trust for Conservation Volunteers with participation from members of the Management Committee. The Ravenswick Estate have also undertaken a considerable amount of thinning, tree safety work and scrub control on behalf of the Management Committee.

Management Committee meetings are normally followed by an inspection of the site to identify any work required.

2.2 Future management

Future management needs can be divided into 'routine' annual tasks and more occasional tasks to be undertaken as and when necessary, or as resources allow.

2.2.1 Annual tasks

- (a) Mowing of limestone grassland in Compartment 2 (area D): 50% should be cut and raked in September each year.

Note: cutting with a reciprocating blade or similar mower will make raking easier. A flail mower should not be used. Prompt removal of cuttings reduces the build-up of nutrients (thus discouraging rank grasses) and prevents smaller wildflowers becoming smothered by the mulch.

- (b) The growth of Japanese knotweed should be monitored annually. If there are signs of spread, appropriate steps should be taken to control this invasive species.

Note: Japanese knotweed has established on tipped material on the embankment below the golf club car park in Compartment 2. Cutting and/or herbicide treatment should be considered to prevent further spread.

- (c) Cutting of encroaching vegetation along footpaths should be carried out each summer where necessary.

Note: at present footpaths are well used and more or less self-maintaining.

- (e) Hazardous timber should be dealt with on an ongoing basis as necessary. An inspection of potentially hazardous timber should be taken annually and appropriate action taken.

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Note: Cross reference with Manor Vale Woodland History and Environment document 2.2. 'Evaluation of nature conservation interest' in respect of the ecological importance of dead wood and recommendations for its management:

Extract of 2.2.3 Naturalness

Trees should be allowed to age naturally since aged trees provide one of the most important habitat features in woodland. The presence of dead and decaying timber is part of this natural process and should not be removed except where it presents a safety hazard. Where removal of hazardous timber is necessary, lopping, crown reduction, pollarding or leaving a standing bole should be considered in preference to felling.

Extract of 2.2.4 Rarity

The 'naturalness' of Manor Vale Wood contributes much to the character of the site, its appeal to local people and its value to wildlife. Maintaining its natural qualities should be a key consideration in all management decisions.

(f) Hawthorn thinning: small-scale thinning of hawthorn in Compartment 2 should be continued each winter, at least for the next few years.

Note: dense, spindly hawthorn thickets have limited wildlife value and prevent re-establishment of a more natural woodland habitat. However, open-grown hawthorns along the rides and woodland edge are very valuable, providing nectar for insects and berries for birds. Old hawthorns may be particularly valuable for lichens, invertebrates etc and should never be removed.

(g) Mowing of the road verges (undertaken by the golf club).

Note: grass cuttings left to mulch down may be contributing to stinging nettle growth at the foot of the slope. The possibility of boxing cuttings should be investigated.

(h) Maintain a record of work undertaken each year.

(i) Reference to the North Yorkshire Council annual Public Rights of Way survey report

2.2.2 Occasional tasks

(a) North Yorkshire Council to maintain and repair public rights of way, steps and stiles as necessary.

(b) Maintenance of public benches throughout the woodland as necessary.

(c) Consider production of an information leaflet explaining the history and wildlife interest of Manor Vale.

(c) Encourage research into the history of Manor Vale.

(d) Encourage further biodiversity survey.

(e) Cut back encroaching scrub and ash saplings around the margins of limestone grassland in area D as necessary.

(f) Check visibility of information boards.

2.2.3 Scheduled tasks

Triennial tree safety inspections to be carried out by an independent professional, in line with insurance requirements and good practice.

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2.2.4 Frequently asked questions:

- (a) **Q. Why is the felled wood left in situ?**
 - A. Wood decomposition is one of a woodland's essential recycling processes and a natural part of every tree's lifecycle. Dead and decaying wood also provides a nutrient-rich habitat for fungi, a nursery for beetle larvae and a larder for insectivorous birds and other animals.
- (b) **Q. Why are the brambles not cleared?**
 - A. The bramble is a source of food for many species of insect and mite, with some species feeding exclusively on bramble. The bramble is also important to dormice, which eat their flowers and fruit; they and other animals/birds seek refuge in bramble thickets. Brambles offer protection from grazing/browsing (by deer/rabbits) to young tree seedlings.
- (c) **Q. Who is responsible for the surfacing of footpaths and bridleways?**
 - A. North Yorkshire Council is the authority responsible for Public Rights of Way (PRoW) which includes footpaths, bridleways, restricted byways and byways open to all traffic. This responsibility includes liaising with landowners to ensure they meet their duties and responsibilities, maintenance of path surfaces, clearing undergrowth from the path surface and improving accessibility where funding is made available